

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA  
SAVANNAH DIVISION**

LANCE LIGHTNER,	)	
	)	
Movant,	)	
	)	
v.	)	CV417-227
	)	CR416-088
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,	)	
	)	
Respondent.	)	

**REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Guilty-plea convicted for possession and receipt of child pornography, doc. 18<sup>1</sup> (plea agreement), Lance Lightner was sentenced to a total of 276 months' imprisonment. *See* doc. 29 (judgment imposing 216 months' imprisonment on count two and 60 months' imprisonment on count seven, to run consecutively). He now moves under 28 U.S.C. § 2255 to vacate his sentence based on counsel's failure "to move to suppress evidence derived from a warrantless search of his cellular telephone, on a military installation." Doc. 36 at 4. Preliminary § 2255 Rule 4 review shows that his motion should be **DENIED**.

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<sup>1</sup> The Court is citing to the criminal docket in CR416-088 unless otherwise noted, and all page numbers are those imprinted by the Court's docketing software.

Four sets of governing principles must be applied here. First, Lightner “bears the burden of establishing the need for § 2255 relief, as well as that of showing the need for an evidentiary hearing.” *Mikell v. United States*, 2011 WL 830095 at \* 2 (S.D. Ga. Jan. 26, 2011); *see also Williams v. Allen*, 598 F.3d 778, 788 (11th Cir. 2010). He thus must demonstrate that any claimed error constitutes “a fundamental defect which inherently results in a complete miscarriage of justice.” *United States v. Addonizio*, 442 U.S. 178, 185 (1979) (quotes and cite omitted).

Second, any claims not raised on direct appeal are procedurally defaulted, *Lynn v. United States*, 365 F.3d 1225, 1234 (11th Cir. 2004), though claims of ineffective assistance of counsel (IAC)<sup>2</sup> generally are not. *Massaro v. United States*, 538 U.S. 500, 504 (2003). Third, “the two-part *Strickland v. Washington* test applies to challenges to guilty pleas based on ineffective assistance of counsel.” *Hill v. Lockhart*, 474 U.S. 52, 58 (1985); *Lalani v. United States*, 315 F. App’x 858, 860-61 (11th Cir. 2009).

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<sup>2</sup> In *Strickland v. Washington*, 466 U.S. 668, 687 (1984), the Supreme Court created a two-part test for determining whether counsel’s assistance was ineffective. First, the movant must demonstrate that his attorney’s performance was deficient, which requires a showing that “counsel made errors so serious that counsel was not functioning as the ‘counsel’ guaranteed by the Sixth Amendment.” *Id.* Second, he must demonstrate that the defective performance prejudiced the defense to such a degree that the results of the trial cannot be trusted. *Id.*

And fourth, a defendant who enters an unconditional plea of guilty “may not thereafter raise independent claims relating to the deprivation of constitutional rights that occurred *prior* to the entry of the guilty plea.” *Tollett v. Henderson*, 411 U.S. 258, 267 (1973) (emphasis added). That is, “[a] defendant’s plea of guilty, made knowingly, voluntarily, and with the benefit of competent counsel, waives all non-jurisdictional defects in that defendant’s court proceedings.” *United States v. Pierre*, 120 F.3d 1153, 1155 (11th Cir. 1997); *see also United States v. Patti*, 337 F.3d 1317, 1320 (11th Cir. 2003). The bar applies both on appeal and on collateral attack. *See United States v. Broce*, 488 U.S. 563, 569 (1989). “A defendant who wishes to preserve appellate review of a non-jurisdictional defect while at the same time pleading guilty can do so only by entering a ‘conditional guilty plea’ in accordance with Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 11(a)(2).” *Pierre*, 120 F.3d at 1155.

Defendants who have entered an unconditional guilty plea, therefore, may challenge their pre-plea constitutional claims only by showing that the advice they received from counsel undermined “the

voluntary and intelligent character of the plea.” *Tollett*, 411 U.S. at 267. This includes

defects in the procedure by which the plea was received or circumstances which make the plea other than voluntary, knowing and intelligent. It also includes cases where the guilty plea was induced through threats, misrepresentations, or improper promises, such that the defendant cannot be said to have been fully apprised of the consequences of the guilty plea. . . .

*Mikell*, 2011 WL 830095 at \*2 (cites and quotes omitted). Otherwise, all substantive claims that could have been raised before the plea, such as suppression-based claims, are waived. *Franklin v. United States*, 589 F.2d 192, 194-95 (5th Cir. 1979) (“By entering a knowing, voluntary, intelligent guilty plea on the advice of competent counsel, [petitioner] has waived all nonjurisdictional complaints . . . [such as] claims regarding *Miranda* warnings, coerced confessions, perjury and illegal searches and seizures. . . .”); *Washington v. United States*, 2010 WL 3338867 at \* 15 (S.D. Ala. Aug. 5, 2010) (collecting Eleventh Circuit cases denying habeas relief on suppression-based IAC claims and concluding that, “[b]ecause all of Washington’s asserted claims of ineffective assistance of counsel relate to the suppression issue, the denial of which has been waived . . . they have been waived by petitioner’s entry of a knowing and voluntary plea. . . .”).

Lightner, who pled guilty unconditionally, cites no legally cognizable involuntariness grounds (*e.g.*, that he was threatened or misled by his lawyer, the judge, etc.) that would undermine his guilty plea. *See Tollett*, 411 U.S. at 267; *Hill v. Lockhart*, 474 U.S. 52, 59 (1985). Indeed, he does not even contend that his plea was anything but knowingly and voluntarily made. Movant argues instead that counsel's failure to move to suppress the evidence gained from the "warrantless search of [his] cellular telephone," which formed the basis of the charges against him, deprived him of an evidentiary hearing that might have weakened the Government's case against him. *See doc. 37* at 5-6 & 11-12.

Put simply, Lightner concedes his factual guilt but challenges the admissibility of the Government's proof -- and that claim is *waived* by the entry of his knowing and voluntary plea. *Doc. 18* at 8-9 (affirming that: (1) he has had the full benefit of competent, satisfactory counsel to fully apprise him of his right to proceed to trial and the rights he is giving up by pleading guilty, and (2) that he has "free[ly] and voluntary[il]ly" chosen to plead guilty and consequently (among other

things) waived his right to collaterally attack his sentence on any grounds save IAC).

A “§ 2255 action is not designed to account for buyer’s remorse. But that is all that is at issue here.” *Falgout v. United States*, 2013 WL 3712336 at \* 6 (N.D. Ala. July 12, 2013); *Nelson v. United States*, 2015 WL 4756975 at \* 1 (S.D. Ga. Aug. 11, 2015) (“Nelson has wasted this Court’s time with a ‘buyer’s remorse’ filing. He chose to plead guilty with full knowledge of the consequences. Now he must live with those consequences.”). Lightner’s § 2255 motion should be **DISMISSED**.

Applying the Certificate of Appealability (COA) standards set forth in *Brown v. United States*, 2009 WL 307872 at \* 1-2 (S.D. Ga. Feb. 9, 2009), the Court discerns no COA-worthy issues at this stage of the litigation, so no COA should issue either. 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(1); Rule 11(a) of the Rules Governing Habeas Corpus Cases Under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 (“The district court *must* issue or deny a certificate of appealability when it enters a final order adverse to the applicant”) (emphasis added).

This Report and Recommendation (R&R) is submitted to the district judge assigned to this action, pursuant to 28 U.S.C.

§ 636(b)(1)(B) and this Court's Local Rule 72.3. Within 14 days of service, any party may file written objections to this R&R with the Court and serve a copy on all parties. The document should be captioned "Objections to Magistrate Judge's Report and Recommendations." Any request for additional time to file objections should be filed with the Clerk for consideration by the assigned district judge.

After the objections period has ended, the Clerk shall submit this R&R together with any objections to the assigned district judge. The district judge will review the magistrate judge's findings and recommendations pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C). The parties are advised that failure to timely file objections will result in the waiver of rights on appeal. 11th Cir. R. 3-1; see *Symonett v. V.A. Leasing Corp.*, 648 F. App'x 787, 790 (11th Cir. 2016); *Mitchell v. United States*, 612 F. App'x 542, 545 (11th Cir. 2015).

**SO REPORTED AND RECOMMENDED**, this 7th day of December, 2017.

  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA